

John Hardy Vs. John

HARDY, John. The popular song "John Hardy" without doubt had its origin and development in West Virginia. The hero of this modern ballad was a Negro, whose prowess and fame are sung far and wide among his own race, and to a less extent among white folk. No written or printed statements concerning him are known to exist except an order in the courthouse at Welch, McDowell County, W. Va., for his execution. However, the statements hereinafter given are believed to be thoroughly reliable.

In a letter dated Charleston, W. Va., Feb. 16, 1916, addressed to Dr. H. S. Green of that city, and written by the Hon. W. A. McCorkle, governor of West Virginia from 1893 to 1897, occurs the following: —

"He [John Hardy] was a steel-driver, and was famous in the beginning of the building of the C. & O. Railroad. He was also a steel-driver in the beginning of the construction of the

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“He [John Hardy] was a steel-driver, and was famous in the beginning of the building of the C. & O. Railroad. He was also a steel-driver in the beginning of the extension of the N. & W. Railroad. It was about 1872 that he was in this section. This was before the day of steam-drills; and the drill-work was done by two powerful men, who were special steel-drillers. They struck the steel from each side; and as they struck the steel, they sang a song which they improvised as they worked. John Hardy was the most famous steel-driller ever in southern West Virginia. He was a magnificent specimen of the genus *Homo*, was reported to be six feet two, and weighed two hundred and twenty five or thirty pounds, was straight as an arrow, and was one of the most handsome men in the country, and, as one informant told me, was as ‘black as a kittle in hell.’

“Whenever there was any spectacular performance along the lines of drilling, John Hardy was put on the job; and it is said that he could drill more steel than any two men of his day. He was a great gambler, and was

not positive about the truth of his story is a story of composite character, arise in the land, heart, very strong address, yet a ga drunkard, and a fier

“The song is of construction-camps, driving steel in a prowess of John Hardy. I enclose you some addition to the one course, you understand about John Hardy and Negroes. I cannot Hardy that you mean the same John Hardy it may be so, for he in that vicinity who himself. He was near the C. & O. He was Virginia contractor Co., and the Langhorne

Mr. Ernest I. student of University, who Welch, and whom up the records of to report such as could secure, in Sept. 14, 19 follows: —

“John Hardy

John Hardy Vs. John Henry

HARDY, John. The popular song "John Hardy" without doubt had its origin and development in West Virginia. The hero of this modern ballad was a Negro, whose prowess and fame sung far and wide among his own race, and to a less extent among white folk. No written or printed statements concerning him are known to exist except an entry in the courthouse at Welch, Dowell County, W. Va., for his execution. However, the statements hereinafter given are believed to be thoroughly reliable. In a letter dated Charleston, Va., Feb. 16, 1916, addressed Dr. H. S. Green of that city, written by the Hon. W. A. Corkle, governor of West Virginia from 1893 to 1897, are the following: —

He [John Hardy] was a steel-driver, was famous in the beginning of the laying of the C. & O. Railroad. He was also a steel-driver in the beginning of the extension of the N. & W. Railroad. It was about 1872 that he was in this section. This was before the use of steam-drills; and the drill-work was done by two powerful men, who were called special steel-drillers. They struck the steel from each side; and as they worked the steel, they sang a song which was improvised as they worked. John Hardy was the most famous steel-driller ever in southern West Virginia. He was a magnificent specimen of the genus *Homo*, was said to be six feet two, and weighed two hundred and twenty-five pounds, was straight as an arrow, and was one of the most handsome men in the country; and, as an informant told me, was as 'black as a coal ball.'

Whenever there was any spectacular performance along the line of drilling, John Hardy was put on the job, and it is said that

notorious all through the country for his luck in gambling. To the dusky sex all through the country, he was the 'greatest ever,' and he was admired and beloved by all the Negro women from the southern West Virginia line to the C. & O. In addition to this, he could drink more whiskey, sit up all night and drive steel all day, to a greater extent than any man ever known in the country.

"The killing in which he made his final exit was a 'mixtery' between women, cards, and liquor; and it was understood that it was more of a fight than a murder. I have been unable to find out where he was hung, but have an idea that it was down in the southwest part, near Virginia; but I am not positive about this. In other words, his story is a story of one of the composite characters that so often arise in the land, — a man of kind heart, very strong, pleasant in his address, yet a gambler, a roue, a drunkard, and a fierce fighter.

"The song is quite famous in the construction-camps; and when they are driving steel in a large camp, the prowess of John Hardy is always sung. I enclose you some verses which are in addition to the ones you sent me. Of course, you understand that all this about John Hardy is merely among the Negroes. I cannot say that the John Hardy that you mention was hung is the same John Hardy of the song; but it may be so, for he was supposed to be in that vicinity when he last exploited himself. He was never an employee of the C. & O. He was an employee of the Virginia contractors, C. R. Mason & Co., and the Langhorn Company."

Mr. Ernest I. Kyle, a former student of West Virginia University, whose home is at Welch, and whom I asked to look up the records of the trial and also to report such other data as he could secure, in a letter dated

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another Negro over a crap game at Shawnee Camp. This place is now known as Eckman, W. Va. (the name of the P.O.). The Shawnee Coal Company was and is located there. Hardy was tried and convicted in the July term of the McDowell County Criminal Court, and was hanged near the courthouse on Jan. 19, 1894. While in jail, he composed a song entitled 'John Hardy,' and sung it on the scaffold before the execution. He was baptized the day before the execution. The last information I got from W. T. Tabor, who was deputy clerk of the Criminal Court at the time of the trial, and is now engaged in civil engineering. There is no record of the trial of John Hardy in the courthouse. Mr. Tabor informs me that there is no record of the trial in existence. The only thing I could find at the courthouse was the order for John Hardy's execution."

The order is as follows: —
State of W. Va.

vs.

John Hardy.
Felony.

This day came again the State by her attorney and the Prisoner who

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the trial... could find at the courthouse was the order for John Hardy's execution."

The order is as follows: —
State of W. Va.

vs.

John Hardy.
Felony.

This day came again the State by her attorney and the Prisoner who stands convicted of murder in the first degree was again brought to the bar of the Court in custody of the Sheriff of this County; and thereupon the Prisoner being asked by the Court if anything he had or could say why the Court should not proceed to pass the sentence of the law upon him in accordance with the verdict of the jury impanelled in this cause, and the Prisoner saying nothing why such sentence should not be passed upon him by the Court; It is therefore considered by the Court that the Prisoner John Hardy, is guilty as found by the verdict of the jury herein and that the said John Hardy be hanged by the neck until he is dead, and that the Sheriff of the County, on Friday the 19th day of January 1894, take the said John Hardy from the jail of the County to some suitable place to be selected by him in this County and there hang the said John Hardy by the neck until he is dead, and the prisoner is remanded to jail.

The following statement was given by Mr. W. T. Tabor to Mr.

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"I was at K that Hardy kille couldn't tell yo now. They wer Shawnee can crap-shooting, an behind a rock wit is supposed that i man that he Winchester to ge killed they sent and Tom Campbe search the camps searching the cam they go, down th on the railroad at the old bridge b they turned up th 'We will follow ti says, 'No, we can't woods; they have good a gun as we ha back and decided Me and some on

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H. J. Grossman, principal of the High School at Welch, and by him forwarded to me.

"John Hardy: Negro, about forty years of age; black in color; from Virginia; worked as miner in coal-fields; had no family as known; killed another Negro in a crap game over 75 cents; another Negro named Guggins helped him escape and tried to wrest gun from sheriff to shoot, but both men were captured and returned to Welch. Guggins was given a life term for attempt to kill sheriff.

"Hardy hung in '94 in present courthouse yard, though not such at the time. At time of execution some white man in the crowd started a panic by yelling, 'O Lordy! O Lordy!' Officers had to jail some twenty-five or thirty men before execution could safely be concluded. Hardy lies buried in Woodmont addition to town of Welch."

The statement of R. L. Johnson, constable, who helped

lows: —
/a.

in Woodmont addition to town of Welch."

The statement of R. L. Johnson, constable, who helped arrest Hardy, as compiled by Mr. Charles V. Price, shorthand reporter at Welch, W. Va., from a conversation between Johnson and Judge Herndon, was sent to me in the early part of the year 1917. It follows: —

"I was at Keystone the morning that Hardy killed this fellow, but I couldn't tell you the fellow's name now. They were shooting craps at Shawnee camp, and he was crap-shooting, and Webb Gudgin was behind a rock with a Winchester, and it is supposed that if Hardy didn't get the man that he was there with a Winchester to get him. After he was killed they sent to Keystone, and me and Tom Campbell went down there to search the camps; and while we were searching the camps they said, 'Yonder they go, down the road!' and we got on the railroad and followed them to the old bridge below Shawnee, and they turned up the hollow, and I says, 'We will follow them up there.' Tom says, 'No, we can't follow them in the woods; they have got a Winchester, as good a gun as we have got.' So we went back and decided to watch the trains. Me and some one, I think it was

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Harvey Dillon, was watching Northfork station. They got on the train at Grover, and they got them; and when they went to handcuff Hardy, Gudgin was walking through the coaches, and every one went out to get Gudgin, and he made to jerk John off the train; but John held to him till they got the train stopped, and they sent a colored fellow back there to help him, and they put him on the train and brought him back to Keystone. George Dillon and I took charge of him. John wasn't able to stay up. We took charge of them and guarded them that night, and they come and threatened to lynch him, and we said they couldn't come up there, and Webb said if we would unhandcuff him and give him his gun nobody would come up there. We had him over Belcher's store.

"I believe I come down the next morning and put them in jail. I never knew anything more about the case until the trial. I was down here during the trial. After he was found guilty he wanted to be baptized. We took him down there to the river, and I was along with him when they baptized him. I forget what preacher baptized him. He had on a new suit of clothes, hat and everything, but he didn't like the looks of his shoes at all. I took them back and swapped them; and when he put them on and viewed himself he had on the best suit he ever had, the way I looked at it. He was about six feet two, I think, or maybe he might have been six foot three."

JUDGE HERNDON. Give his color, before you start on Gudgin.

MR. JOHNSON. He was black.

JUDGE HERNDON. About what age?

MR. JOHNSON. Well, I couldn't hardly tell you. I would figure him about thirty.

JUDGE HERNDON. Now give a description of Gudgin.

MR. JOHNSON. Well, Gudgin, I believe, was a little taller than I am, I believe about six feet, heavily built. He wasn't so fleshy, but he was heavy built, yellow.

JUDGE HERNDON. Were you deputy sheriff at the time?

MR. JOHNSON. I was constable.

JUDGE HERNDON. Campbell was deputy sheriff?

MR. JOHNSON. Yes.

Effler was the sheriff of McDowell County at that time?

MR. JOHNSON. Yes, sir.

JUDGE HERNDON. In the town of Welch now do you know about the spot where the scaffold was built?

MR. JOHNSON. Why, I could get out here and look it up, but it was right out here somewhere.

MR. DAVID COLLINS. It was right back of the old temporary jail.

JUDGE HERNDON. You say you don't remember the name of the man John Hardy killed?

MR. JOHNSON. No, I don't remember him.

JUDGE HERNDON. But do you remember what they killed him for?

MR. JOHNSON. They were shooting craps. It is my understanding they had had the crap game before, and this fellow had skinned Hardy, and he went back started the crap game to get to kill him. That was the statement at the time.

JUDGE HERNDON. In other words, this colored man that Hardy killed had skinned Hardy in the game before that game?

MR. JOHNSON. Yes, sir, and Hardy goes down and starts a crap game, and Webb was behind this rock with his Winchester so if Hardy failed he would get him. That was the statement, what they claimed when they came after us, when we went down there.

JUDGE HERNDON. Where was he from?

MR. JOHNSON. I don't know. I might have heard, but I never paid any attention. We were out nearly all night that night. I recollect it well. I think it was about the first year John Effler was elected sheriff. My recollection is that the time Hardy killed the other colored man was along some time during the first of the year, in 1893, and that he was tried along about April or May, 1893, and hanged soon after his conviction, about sixty days.

Mr. A. C. Payne, English, W. Va., in a letter dated Oct. 16, 1917, writes me as follows: -

"Just received your letter requesting information of a Negro

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miner about 6 feet high and about 25 years old, as well as I could guess at him. He killed a Negro boy about 19 years old. And he was a very black Negro. That is about all I know about him."

The above-quoted statements seem to establish two groups of facts:—

1. (a) That about the year 1872 there was a certain John Hardy employed as a steel-driller in railroad-construction in the southern part of West Virginia. This man was a very black Negro, six feet tall, or more, of splendid physique, a drinker, a gambler, a roue, and a fierce fighter.

(b) That later this Negro killed a man in an altercation of some sort in which gambling played a part.

(c) That the murder and execution took place in the southern part of the State, near the Virginia line.

2. (a) That in the year 1893 a certain John Hardy was employed as a coal-miner in the extreme southern part of West Virginia. This man was a very black Negro, six feet two or three inches tall, and a gambler.

(b) That this John Hardy killed a man over a crap game for the sum of seventy-five cents.

(c) That the murder and execution took place in the southern part of the State, near the Virginia line.

The identity of these two men is not established, but the inference that they are the same is extremely probable. That two men of the same name and race, so nearly alike in physique, habits, and characteristics, should meet the same fate, for the same crime, in the same locality, is hardly believable.

The consideration of the age of the Hardy of 1893 is important in determining whether he and the Hardy of 1872 are identical. The

prowess of the steel-driller of 1872 indicates a man of mature age, let us say twenty-four or twenty-five. In 1893 he would then have been forty-five or forty-six. Three of the men connected with the trial of Hardy have given estimates of his age as follows: Tabor, assistant clerk of the Criminal Court, forty; Johnson, constable, thirty; Payne, jurymen, twenty-five. The value of these estimates depends upon two things,—first, accuracy of memory in recalling, after a lapse of twenty-four years, such details of feature as would enable one to judge of age; and, second, the ability of the witness to make such a judgment. Mr. Johnson says, "I couldn't hardly tell you about what age. I would figure him about thirty." The statement itself indicates much uncertainty about the matter. Mr. Payne says, "About twenty-five years old, as well as I could guess at him." Evidently at the trial Hardy's age was not brought out, or at least not emphasized enough to be remembered, and a guess by memory after twenty-four years may not be worth much. Mr. Tabor says, "About forty years of age." Mr. Tabor was deputy clerk of the court that tried Hardy, and is now engaged in civil engineering. His statements indicate a better-trained and more accurate type of mind than the others, and have a directness that is assuring. In any case, the judgment of the age of a Negro of the splendid physical type of Hardy is a difficult matter, hard to come at within ten years, and more likely to be underestimated than overestimated. In my judgment, the testimony may well point to an age considerable in excess of forty.

Mr. H. S. Walker, a man of mature years, a student in West Virginia University from Fayette

County, through which the C. & O. runs, reports the following as a current belief where he lives: —

John Hardy, a Negro, worked for Langhorn, a railroad-contractor from Richmond, Va., at the time of the building of the C. & O. Road. Langhorn had a contract for work on the east side of the Big Bend Tunnel, which is in the adjoining county of Summers, to the east of Fayette County; and some other contractor had the work on the west side of the tunnel. This was the time when the steam-driller was first used. Langhorn did not have one, but the contractor on the other side of the tunnel did; and Langhorn made a wager with him that Hardy could, by hand, drill a hole in less time than the steam-drill could. In the contest that followed, Hardy won, but dropped dead on the spot. He tells me, also, that there is a current report in this part of the State concerning a John Hardy who was a tough, a saloon frequenter, an outlaw, and a sort of a thug. He thinks this John Hardy was a white man, and he is sure that he was hanged later on for killing a man in McDowell County or across the line in Virginia.

Probability indicates that these two stories are about the same man. For a white man contemporary with the steel-driller to possess the same name and attributes as he, to operate in the early part of his career in the same region, to drift later to the same locality, to commit the same crime, and to pay the same penalty, is not believable.

There remains the belief that John Hardy died from the effects of the drilling-contest. In answer to inquiries concerning this, Ex-Gov. McCorkle writes, "You are mistaken when you say John Hardy died from the

drilling-contest." In support of the belief, however, there is a ballad called "The Steel Driver," not as yet found in West Virginia, but reported by Shearin in his *Syllabus of Kentucky Folk-Songs*, p. 19, as follows: —

"THE STEEL DRIVER, ii, 1a3b4c3b, II: John Henry, proud of his skill with sledge and hand-drill, competes with a modern steam-drill in Tunnel No. Nine, on the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad. Defeated, he dies, asking to be buried with his tools at his breast."

The change of name to John Henry, and the victory into a defeat, is not significant, and is easily accounted for by oral transmission. The same process of reasoning as applied heretofore identifies John Henry with John Hardy, who could not have died at the end of a drilling-contest. Most likely the ballad celebrating the prowess of John Hardy gradually, in its earlier making, enhanced that prowess, and, by the natural tendency to a tragic ending, finally sang of his defeat and death.

Whether the drilling-contest be fact or fiction, is not important. However, it could hardly have happened. A note addressed to the Ingersoll-Rand Company, to whom I was referred as authority on drills, brings the following statement in a letter dated New York City, Dec. 19, 1917: —

"Your letter of Dec. 4, addressed to the Company at Easton, Pa., has been referred to us, and in reply we would advise you that, although we have no definite records, it is rather improbable that steam rock-drills were used in the building of the C. & O. Railroad. As you will see from the text of the attached advertisement, machine-drills were first used about 1866; but their use was very limited, and not at all general."

The portion of the advertisement above referred to,

that is significant discussion, is as follows: —

"The first time used in big work Tunnel, year 1866, drill failed because costs. Next came Tunnel, Lehigh V. from end to end drill, which had practical stage in Avenue, New York tunnel. This cover 1875, when the made a step in adva

The Chesapeake Railroad was co from Sulphur Huntington — t across the Virginia — in 18

Two version with a total of come to hand. something w a t m o s p h e construction-can of illiterate Neg and its glorificat a drunkard, and the exception of the ballad deals of the hanging, clearly stated, an gambling. The n Shawnee Camp, i but the number increased to murderer is cau refused to run. N bulk of the balla incident in the Hardy, but the p the beginning an given to it. The c the steel-drillin however, clearly r vigorously exp evidently on forgetfulness. This half way, as it we "Steel Driller" last and version A In

that is significant for this discussion, is as follows: —

"The first time rock-drills were used in big work was at the Hoosac Tunnel, year 1866. Here the Burleigh drill failed because of great repair costs. Next came the Musconetong Tunnel, Lehigh Valley R. R., driven from end to end with the Ingersoll drill, which had been brought to a practical stage in rock-work on Fourth Avenue, New York, for the horse-car tunnel. This covers the period up to 1875, when the Rand Little Giant made a step in advance."

The Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad was completed westward from Sulphur Springs to Huntington — that is, entirely across the State of West Virginia — in 1873.

Two versions of the ballad, with a total of five variants, have come to hand. Version *a* gives us something with the very atmosphere of the construction-camp, its rough gang of illiterate Negroes, its profanity, and its glorification of a gambler, a drunkard, and a murderer. With the exception of stanzas 2 and 3, the ballad deals with the episode of the hanging, in some way not clearly stated, and connected with gambling. The name of the place, Shawnee Camp, is exactly correct; but the number of men killed is increased to two, and the murderer is caught because he refused to run. Not only does the bulk of the ballad deal with this incident in the career of John Hardy, but the prominent places, the beginning and the end, are given to it. The older incident of the steel-drilling contest is, however, clearly remembered and vigorously expressed, though evidently on the way to forgetfulness. This version stands half way, as it were, between the "Steel Driller" listed by Shearin and version *b*.

In version *b* the steel-driller has dropped out of memory

entirely. Shawnee Camp has become a Chinese camp, — an easy change, — and consequently the man killed is a Chinaman. The yellow girl with her money is still in the game, and a man is killed in a gambling-brawl. The reference to the Big Bend Tunnel is probably a cross-reference from another West Virginia ballad (namely, "The Wreck on the C. & O. Road") very popular in the southern part of the State, and contemporary in growth with that part of "John Hardy" since 1894. The last two stanzas, given to John Hardy himself, furnish an interesting reference to a fact in his history (namely, his baptism before hanging), and may be a remnant of the song he composed and sang just before his death. The introduction of the conventional ballad element of having the hero's mother and sweetheart come to see him is to be noted in stanzas 6 and 7.

Versions *c*, *d*, and *e* are variants of version *b*. In *c* the Negro gambling-dive is exalted to a "Wild West show" (stanza 2), and the conventionalizing process is carried further in stanza 6 by giving him a "pretty little wife," whom he kept "dressed in blue," and who had always been true to him. In *d* the yellow girl becomes a less shadowy personage, upon whom is bestowed the high-sounding, romantic name, Rozella (stanza 2). The refusal of the Court to grant bond to a "murderer" man in stanza 6 is a good bit of realism, with which, no doubt, the Negro singers of this ballad were fairly familiar. The reference to his baptism fails to appear. In *e* the conventionalizing process goes on apace: the father is introduced, the hero is blessed with three children, and two stanzas (7 and 8) from *The Lass of Roch Royal* (Child, No. 76) are inserted.

As a result of this study, the following things appeal to me as significant: —

1. The origin in our day of such a ballad among an illiterate and comparatively primitive people.

2. The testimony of spontaneous composition of stanzas by men engaged in the hard work of steel-drilling.

3. The two groups of facts in Hardy's life centring respectively about the dates 1872 and 1894, which furnish the nuclei for three types of ballad as to content: (a) John Hardy, the steel-driver; (b) John Hardy, the steel-driver and the murdered; (c) John Hardy, the murderer.

4. The unreliability of statements in the ballad; and the difficulty, even at this early date, of determining the facts on which the song is based.

5. The passing of the song into the possession of white folk, and the rapid introduction on conventional elements of balladry. All the copies of the ballad in my possession were communicated by white people.

"John Hardy" is recorded elsewhere as follows: —

SHEARIN AND COMBS, A Syllabus of Kentucky Folk-Song, p. 19. "John Hardy," iii, 4a3b4c3b, 6. — An account of Hardy's shooting a man in a poker-game; of his arrest, trial, conviction, conversion, and baptism; and of his execution and burial on the Tug River.

— *Ibid.*, "The Steel Driver," ii, 4a3b4c3b, II. — John Henry, proud of his skill with sledge and hand-drill, competes with a modern steam-drill in Tunnel No. Nine, on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad. Defeated, he dies, asking to be buried with his tools at his breast.

JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLK-LORE, 22:247. — A North Carolina version of four stanzas contributed by Miss Louise Rand Bascom, in which John Hardy shot a man in New Orleans Town, as he is

made to say, "for the sake of her love." The fact of his baptism is mentioned.

Ibid., 22:249-250. — Louise Rand Bascom reports from North Carolina "Johnie Henry," which she says begins, —

"Johnie Henry was a hard workin' man,
He died with his hammer in his hand."

Ibid., 26:163-165. — Five variants of "John Henry" reported by E. C. Sparrow. The first four are brief, and the only significant lines are, —

"This ole hammer killed John Henry,
Drivin' Steel, Baby, drivin' steel."

The fifth is a ballad of eight stanzas, obtained from Kentucky mountain whites. In it John Henry is a steel-driver, who competes with a steam-driller in a big tunnel, apparently on the C. & O. line. He leaves a faithful wife to mourn his death.

Ibid., 26:180-182. — Variant *e* of this study, communicated by the present writer; also printed in West Virginia School Journal and Educator, 44:216-217 (September, 1915).

Ibid., 27:249. — Reported by title, "That's the Hammer killed John Henry," from South Carolina, by Henry C. Davis.

Ibid., 28:14. — Communicated by John A. Lomax as being sung along the Chesapeake and Ohio Road in Kentucky and West Virginia. John Henry, the best steel-driver on the C. & O. Road, competes with a steam-driller in Tunnel No. Nine, beats it by an inch and a half, and lays down his hammer and dies.

CAMPBELL AND SHARP, English Folk-Songs from the Southern Appalachians, pp. 257-258: "John Hardy." — A ballad in nine stanzas. Nothing is said of steel-driving, and the hero kills his partner for fifty cents in the "Shunny Camps" (Shawnee Camp). Hardy is evidently thought of as a white man, for the murder is done "for the sake of my blue-eyed girl." The fact of his baptism is mentioned, and two stanzas from "The Lass of Roch Royal" are inserted, the same stanzas as in variant *e* of the present study.

FRANK C.
Ballad-Literature
Carolina (repr
Proceedings and Ac
Fifteenth Annual S

(Communicated by
Ex-Gov. W.A. McCorkle

1. John Hardy
He came
He killed tw
Cause he
Too dam

2. John Hardy
He went
The rock wa
That he l
He laid d

3. John Hardy
The steel
"Before I'd k
I'd die wi
I'd die wi

4. John Hardy
So drunk
"Long come h
Said "You
You count

5. John Hardy w
The pot w
He drew the
And he say
He says, "I

6. John Hardy w
As drunk as he

And I don't care a damn what I say;
I don't care a snap for the police."
But they let John Hardy get away, poor boy!
They let John Hardy get away.

(Version c.)

(Communicated by Mr. Lee C. Wooddell, Durbin, Pocahontas County, who obtained it from Mr. Ernie Wright, Hosterman, Pocahontas County.)

1. John Hardy he was two years old,
Sitting on his mother's knee:
"The Big Ben Tunnel on the C. & O. Road
Is going to be the death of me, poor boy,
Is going to be the death of me, poor boy."
2. John Hardy went into a Wild West show,
Playing at a fifty-cent game:
"Whoever wins my fifty cents,
I'm going to blow out his brains, poor boy!
I'm going to blow out his brains, poor boy."
3. John Hardy laid down a twenty-dollar bill,
And he didn't ask for change:
"All I want is a forty-four gun
To blow out another nigger's brains, poor boy!
To blow out another nigger's brains, poor boy!"
4. John Hardy went to New Port,
Expecting to be free.
The detective patted him on the back:
"John Hardy, go along with me, poor boy!
John Hardy, go along with me, poor boy!"
5. "I've been to the East, I've been to the West,
And I've been all over the world;
I've been to the river to be baptized,
But I'm on my hanging-ground, poor boy!
But I'm on my hanging-ground, poor boy!"
6. John Hardy had a pretty little wife,
He kept her dressed in blue.
When she heard that John was dead,
"John Hardy, I've been true to you, poor boy!
John Hardy, I've been true to you, poor boy!"

(Version d.)

(Communicated by Mr. John B. Adkins, Branchland, Lincoln County, who obtained it from David Dick, an old banjo-player.)

(Version c.)

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THE JOHN HENRY HAMMER SONG

A

Mrs. Sidney Wilson, Minnehaha Springs, W. Va. Mrs. Wilson obtained this version from her brother, a man well acquainted with construction camps in the South.

This old hammer, - - huh,
Killed John Henry, - - huh;
This old hammer, - - huh,
Killed John Henry, - - huh;
This old hammer, - - huh,
Killed John Henry, - - huh;
Killed him dead, - - huh.

Ain't no hammer, - - huh,
In these mountains, - - huh;
Ain't no hammer, - - huh,
In these mountains, - - huh;
Ain't no hammer, - - huh,
In these mountains, - - huh;
Rings like mine, - - huh.

Take this hammer, - - huh,
And give it to the walker, - - huh;
Take this hammer, - - huh,
And give it to the walker, - - huh;
Take this hammer, - - huh,
And give it to the walker, - - huh;
For I'm goin' home, - - huh.

I told Hattie, - - huh,
To whip - a those children, - - huh;
I told Hattie, - - huh,
To whip - a those children, - - huh;
I told Hattie, - - huh,
To whip - a those children, - - huh;
Make 'em mind, - - huh.

'Cause the penitentiary, - - huh,
Is full o' people, - - huh;
'Cause the penitentiary, - - huh,
Is full o' people, - - huh;
'Cause the penitentiary, - - huh,
Is full o' people, - - huh;
Won't raised right, - - huh.

I told Hattie, - - huh,
 To make her dress a little longer, - - huh;
 I told Hattie, - - huh,
 To make her dress a little longer, - - huh;
 I told Hattie, - - huh,
 To make her dress a little longer, - - huh;
 A - showin' of her laig, - - huh.

B

Newton Redwine. Mr. Redwine says: "John Henry had no regular song to sing as he worked, but it seems that the following was his favorite just before his death." The Beattyville Enterprise, Beattyville, Ky., Feb. 1, 1929.

I have hammered
 Four long years
 With this old hammer

I have hammered
 On the W & A
 I have hammered
 On the old M & C
 I have worked
 On the C & S

The hammer am a ringin'
 And the steel am a singin'
 I'll put the hole
 On down boys
 Put the hole on down

This old hammer
 Killed John Scott
 It will never kill me

Hammer am a ringin'
 Steel am a singin'
 I'll put the hole
 On down boys
 I'll put the hole
 On down - hut - hut - hut

Hut - hut - hut
 I'll put the hole on down
 I'll put the hole on down

This old hammer
 Has killed John Scott
 It will never kill me
 Hut - hut - hut

I'll put the hole on down, boys
 I'll put the hole on down